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DA Dropped Rape Counts Against 'Pro' --Connick



BERT VINCENT PATREM

By ALLAN KATZ

District attorney candidate Harry Connick today charged that Jim Garrison's office dismissed two attempted rape charges against a professional criminal despite eyewitnesses and police reports and then allowed the man to slip out of the state prison on a technicality after he was convicted of burglary.

James L. Alcock, first assistant DA, termed Connick's charge "absurd" and said the two rape charges were dropped because of difficulties with the principal witnesses.

Connick, in an address prepared for a meeting of the Louisiana Motor Transport Association at Delmonico Restaurant, identified the convicted criminal as Bert Vincent Patrem, 26.

"PARTEM IS a 'pro', a sex criminal, a multiple offender who symbolizes the crime that haunts our streets," Connick said.

James L. Alcock, first assistant DA, said he is the prosecutor who convicted Patrem and had him sentenced to four years at Angola. Alcock said Connick's charge that Patrem was allowed to slip out of Angola "is inaccurate and misleading."

"Patrem, and anyone else, sentenced to less than five years, has a right to an appeal bond," Alcock said. "The DA's office had nothing to do with the failure of the authorities at Angola or the Orleans Parish criminal sheriff to make Patrem sign the appeal bond."

"THE DA'S OFFICE convicted Patrem and had him sent to the state penitentiary. That was the extent of our involvement in the case."

Connick said Patrem was arrested on a charge of aggravated burglary and rape, released on bond, arrested a few weeks later on a second charge of aggravated burglary and rape, and released on bond. Then both rape charges against him were dismissed.

Connick said his investigation showed Patrem was released on a bond of \$1,000 in the second attempted rape charge.

The DA candidate said when Patrem was sentenced to four years at Angola on a third aggravated burglary charge, he was released from prison on a \$10,000 appeal bond and fled the state.

In addition, Connick said, no one made Patrem sign his bond, so the document had no legal status and the DA couldn't even collect on the \$10,000 forfeiture.

PARTEM FLED the state and Connick said Florida po-

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lice are now seeking him for crimes committed there. Connick said although Patrem fled Louisiana in January, 1969, it was not until Aug. 14, 1969, that Garrison asked the FBI declared Patrem a fugitive from this state.

Connick, in his speech, outlined his history of Patrem's alleged crime spree in New Orleans:

—On June 8, 1966, Patrem was booked with aggravated burglary at a motel at 7930 Chef Menteur hwy. and the attempted aggravated rape of a woman there who identified him. He made a \$10,000 bond on these charges June 9, 1966. The charges were not pressed, or dismissed, by the DA on Nov. 21, 1966.

Alcock said the case was handled by Charles Ray Ward, then first assistant DA and now, like Connick, a DA candidate. Alcock said his recollection is that the rape victim was uncooperative and refused to testify, thus wrecking the case and causing the charges to be dropped.

—On May 12, 1966, while out on the \$10,000 bail, Patrem was booked with committing aggravated burglary at 7429 Alabama and the beating and attempted aggravated rape of a woman there. Patrem made \$5,000 bond on the burglary charge and \$1,000 bond on the attempted rape charge. Both charges were not pressed on Sept. 28, 1966.

In this case, Alcock said, the victim first picked the suspect out of a lineup but several months later gave a statement to the effect that she was not sure he was the guilty party.

Since she would not testify as to his guilt under oath, "we had no choice but to drop the case," Alcock said.

—On Oct. 19, 1966, Patrem and a confederate were booked with aggravated burglary at 216 Fairway dr. Patrem was still out on the original \$10,000 bond, including the first attempted aggravated rape charge. He was released on a \$5,000 bond.

—On Feb. 21, 1967, Patrem failed to appear for trial. He was reported in Dallas in defiance of bail bond regulations.

—On March 1, 1967, he appeared for his trial, which was continued.

—On March 27, 1967, he

failed to appear for trial.

—On June 22, 1967, he was convicted of the Fairway Dr. burglary and sentenced on July 21 to four years at the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola.

—On August 4, 1967, Patrem arrived at Angola and his attorney filed an appeal.

—On Sept. 17, 1967, Patrem was released from Angola on a \$10,000 appeal bail which someone forgot to have him sign.

—On Sept. 8, 1967, the DA's office charged Patrem as a multiple offender in an effort to increase the severity of his sentence but dismissed these charges on Sept. 28.

—On Sept. 23, 1968, Patrem was arrested in Crestview, Fla., for breaking and entering but was allowed out on bail there.

—On Dec. 3, 1968, the Louisiana Supreme Court upheld Patrem's four-year sentence to Angola but he had fled the state and could not be located.

—On Jan. 2, 1969, Criminal District Court Judge Thomas M. Brahney Jr. discovered that Angola had no record of having released Patrem and that the \$10,000 appeal bond couldn't be forfeited because Patrem never signed it.

In his speech, Connick said, "The Patrem case would be a comedy of errors by the DA's office except that three burglaries were committed as well as attempted rape on two women in New Orleans not to mention the crimes Patrem committed in Florida—hardly funny.

"No wonder our crime rates soar, no wonder people fear to leave their homes at night."

CONNICK CHARGED that "the sloppy operations of the DA's office as evidenced by the Patrem case are the underside of the smooth iceberg Mr. Garrison lets us see.

"This case demonstrates the kind of inefficiency that wrecks police efforts and allows crime in the streets to flourish," he said.

Alcock termed Connick's charges "totally absurd."

"This is obviously an act of desperation on Connick's part. He should go more thoroughly into the background of cases before making public statements about them," Alcock said.